

## ***Dr. Patricia Toles, U.S. Air Force Veteran, 1987 – 2007***



“My career was phenomenal – one of the best decisions in my life.” This is how DC VA Medical Center’s Suicide Prevention Coordinator Dr. Patricia Toles describes her 20 years of service in the United States Air Force.

During her time in the military from 1987 to 2007, Dr. Toles traveled the nation as well as the world. She began her military career in Montgomery, Alabama, at Maxwell Air Force Base. From there, she was stationed at Andrews Air Force Base, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and Fort Meade. She was also deployed to serve in Operation Desert Storm.

After retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel, Dr. Toles joined the DC VA Medical Center and hit the ground running. The Suicide Prevention program was only in its developmental stages when she arrived, yet it was her goal to influence her peers and prove that suicide prevention is everyone’s responsibility. Her advocacy was recognized in 2012 with the VA Secretary's Award for Nursing Excellence.

Her dedication dates back to her Air Force days when she received the Meritorious Service Award for her accomplishments as Chief of Health and Medical Services. She also received Commendation Medals for her time as Deputy Commander of Mental Health, Surgical Department Operations Officer, and Mental Health Day Treatment Program Coordinator.

A product of Grady, Alabama, she reminisces about growing up in the south and being raised by her grandmother. Dr. Toles recounts, “She really stressed the importance of education, and gave me the motivation and determination that I needed.” To this day, Dr. Toles believes that education is key, and it is evident throughout her accomplishments. She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Troy State University, her Master of Science in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma, and her Doctorate in Health Care Administration from the University of Phoenix.

At the end of the day, Dr. Toles is a proud Veteran who is thankful for her military experience. “My Air Force career sent me to school, paid for my education, and provided me with great mentors – it gave me the opportunity to truly experience leadership.”